

Daily Devotional, August 21, 2020 Purification Through Unification

"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come." Mark 3:24-26 (NIV)

There is a team building activity that many businesses use to help employees learn to work together. It is a simple exercise and shows the importance of being unified. In this activity two employees sit on the ground with their backs to each other, and as they press their backs together, dig their feet into the ground, and they are able to stand up, without touching their hands to the ground. They are unified through the interlocking of their arms, and they are unified in the amount of pressure they are placing against each other's backs. Through their simple work together they become unified. Without orking together in a a unified manner, it can prove to be difficult, painful and extremely awkward, making it impossible for either person to be able to stand. Being unified is of utmost importance.

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2020 seems to be quite a year of division. From talking with others, it seems that I am not the only one who feels this way. Of course, division in our country is nothing new. It just seems as if today there are more fronts than ever. There is division along political lines, religion, race issues, police brutality and defunding of law enforcement, gender equality, sexual orientation acceptance, global warming and environment damage, prejudice, inequality, and unfairness of every possible possible flavor, and Coronavirus as the frosting on the upside down cake. This year, it seems as if Satan is upping his game. He's working double, no, triple over-time. And if we're not careful, division will creep into our families, and even into our churches.

Now, more than ever, we need to remain unified. Perhaps that means that difficult conversations need to happen. Keeping the channels of communication open and flowing is most critical. We must try our utmost to understand one another's position, to listen without judgement, and with much grace.

Sometimes it is alright to disagree. God created us all differently, uniquely. It is impossible for all of us to think and feel the same way about anything, let alone in regard to tough topics. That's okay! The bible is full of verses regarding unification, being of one accord, and of course loving one another. Here are a few:

2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

Philippians 2:2-3 Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

Ephesians 4:1-3 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

God not only wants us to be in unity and harmony with one another, He commands us to love one another. *Always*. No matter what. We know the victory is already ours in Christ Jesus, how do we beat Satan at his own game? Here's how: We must immerse ourselves in the Word of God every day; We must pray without ceasing; AND... we must remain unified and work together! Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NIV) says: *"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."* Together we can beat Satan. He will not overcome!

A Prayer for Unity: God, some days we feel so broken and uncertain. We're hurting, and struggling, and we're aware of our own weaknesses, and of the dark forces that constantly surround us, fighting to gain ground in our lives. We choose to stand our ground today and say, "no more." We ask for your help to set aside our differences and look to the greater cause, the cause of Christ. We ask that you help us to truly live a life of love. We ask that you surround this country and cover us with your mighty hand. We pray for unity in our land, that in spite of our differences, we would be willing to stand strong together and live out our days with compassion and grace. Remind us to live in greater awareness, to use this time wisely, to listen to Your words, and be willing to make a difference in this land. Give us courage to speak out, but also patience and compassion to listen. Amen.